

THE PHARMACIST IN HOSPITALS

A pamphlet for the information of the
governing bodies of hospitals

Issued with the compliments of the
Council of the Pharmaceutical Society
of Great Britain in collaboration with
the Guild of Public Pharmacists.

17 Bloomsbury Square
London, W.C.1



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[ca. 1937]

The tradition of the British voluntary and public hospitals has been built upon the quality of the service they render to the public. The continuance of this tradition depends to a great extent upon the hospitals attracting the best men and women into the different branches of their service.

The object of this pamphlet is to show how the employment of pharmacists in the pharmaceutical department of a hospital ensures a high standard in that important part of its organisation.

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THE PHARMACIST IN HOSPITALS

A pharmacist is a person whose name is on the Statutory Register of Pharmacists maintained in accordance with the Pharmacy Acts. Admission to this register is gained by following the course of training and passing the examinations prescribed by the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain under the supervision of the Privy Council. A pharmacist pays a statutory annual fee for the retention of his name on the register.

The evidence that a person is registered is the possession by him of a certificate of registration issued by the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and the presence of his name in the statutory Register published annually by the Society.

All pharmacists are members of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and are subject to the disciplinary control of the Statutory Committee created by the Pharmacy and Poisons Act, 1933.

The pharmacist's training begins with the passing of one of the accepted preliminary examinations—an entrance examination accepted by any University in the British Isles. This is followed by two periods of academic training and one period of practical training. The first period of academic training leads to the Intermediate Examination in Chemistry, Physics, Botany and Zoology, and the second period to one of the qualifying examinations in Pharmacy, Pharmacognosy, Physiology and other technical subjects. The practical training may be received in a hospital, manufacturing laboratory or pharmacy.

The Society grants two qualifications, (1) the Chemist and Druggist and (2) the higher qualification of Pharmaceutical Chemist.

The Universities of Glasgow, London, Manchester and Wales offer degrees in Pharmacy, the holders of which are entitled under certain conditions to registration as pharmaceutical chemists.

Pharmaceutical students may serve their articulated pupilage as part of their training for the qualifying examination in hospitals which have been approved for the purpose by the Pharmaceutical Society.

The statutory privileges of the pharmacist include:—

- (i) the sole right to the use of certain titles and descriptions
- (ii) the right to carry on the business of a Chemist and Druggist under the Pharmacy Acts;
- (iii) the right to supply medicines to insured persons under the National Health Insurance Act;
- (iv) the right to possess, dispense and sell drugs of addiction and poisons.

As the doctor, the lawyer and the architect are recognised in their particular spheres so the pharmacist is recognised by law and by custom as the expert in the selection, testing and compounding of drugs and in their presentation in an active and palatable form. In this sphere he is the specialist adviser to the physician. He is an authority on surgical dressings and on the preparation of sterile medicaments and surgical material.

THE HOSPITAL PHARMACY

The pharmaceutical department of a hospital is one of its pivotal departments. The most skilful diagnosis and careful prescribing calls for accurate dispensing and the use of first-class medicaments. To ensure this the person in charge of the pharmaceutical department of a hospital should be a pharmacist. Such an appointment will secure to patients the standard of skill required for insured persons by the National Health Insurance Acts. That this is a proper standard was the finding of the Royal Commission of National Health Insurance of 1928. The question of a departure from it was canvassed before them and they reported that "it is not desirable in the interests of insured persons to lower the standard of qualification required for persons who may be allowed to dispense medicines provided under the Insurance scheme." In spite of the protection thus given to the public when obtaining medicines under the Insurance scheme, there are no similar statutory provisions governing medical treatment in hospitals whether of in-patients or out-patients.

The London County Council have resolved

“That as regards future appointments to the dispensing staff of hospitals coming under the direction of the Central Public Health Committee:—

- (a) Only persons registered as pharmaceutical chemists or as chemists and druggists be eligible for appointment as dispensers or assistant dispensers in the hospitals or district dispensaries.
- (b) In hospitals or other dispensaries carrying more than one assistant dispenser, an unregistered dispenser,* an articled pupil or an apprentice be eligible for the position of second assistant.”

The Manchester Corporation have resolved

“That, in future, only persons registered as Pharmaceutical Chemists or as Chemists and Druggists be eligible for appointment as dispensers or assistant dispensers in the establishments under the control of this Committee.”

The Voluntary Hospitals Commission of 1936 in their report state

“Of great importance is the Pharmaceutical Service. Those in responsible charge of the Pharmaceutical Department of any hospital should hold a statutory qualification and be registered in accordance with the Pharmacy Acts. At present it is legally permissible for persons not so qualified to be practically in charge of Hospital Pharmaceutical Departments. This not infrequently occurs in smaller hospitals by the appointment of one holding the Apothecaries’ Hall Certificate for Assistants in Dispensing. Where a hospital is so small as not to require full-time service then a qualified pharmacist should be engaged for certain hours.”

The majority of voluntary hospitals, either by a provision in their charter or by a decision of their governing body, require the persons in charge of their pharmaceutical departments to be pharmacists.

* Included to provide for persons, who were not pharmacists, already in the service of the L.C.C.

THE PHARMACIST'S SERVICES TO THE HOSPITAL

The services which a pharmacist can render include these :—

- (1) The ability of the pharmacist to devise preparations to meet special requirements makes it unnecessary to limit prescribing to simple routine preparations. The training of the pharmacist enables him to prepare any of the wide variety of medicines which may be called into use, and the physician is in a position to prescribe freely without the limitations imposed upon prescribing when the medicines are prepared by a non-pharmacist.
- (2) The pharmacist is able, by reason of his scientific training, to adapt himself easily to new developments in medicine and to aid in the employment of new methods of treatment which otherwise might not be practicable in the hospital. In this he is given assistance by the Pharmaceutical Society which provides information, partly through its own publications, the weekly *Pharmaceutical Journal*, the *Quarterly Journal of Pharmacy*, and books of reference, such as the *British Pharmaceutical Codex*, and partly through its Library of 24,000 books and pamphlets, which constitutes a unique collection of British and foreign works on pharmacy and allied subjects.
- (3) The pharmacist is in a position to effect economies in the cost and use of drugs and medical requirements, since his knowledge and experience enable him to purchase supplies with care and discrimination and to manufacture preparations which would otherwise have to be bought ready made.
- (4) From his knowledge of the legal requirements affecting poisons and dangerous drugs, the pharmacist is able fully to appreciate those requirements as they apply to the storage and supply of poisons in hospitals and to ensure their observance in the spirit as well as the letter.
- (5) The handling of "Dangerous Drugs" is considerably facilitated. In hospitals in which a pharmacist is employed, the ordering, keeping and issuing of these

drugs, is, by statutory rule, in his hands. In hospitals where there is no pharmacist there is divided control, the drugs having to be ordered by a medical practitioner and kept under lock and key by the matron. The employment of a pharmacist, therefore, ensures that the method of dealing with them is assimilated very largely to that of other drugs and avoids the inconvenience to the medical staff and matron that is otherwise entailed.

- (6) The pharmacist can advise the medical staff on the best forms of administration of drugs and upon the claims made for new preparations. The very small amount of attention now given to pharmacy in the medical curriculum and the ever-widening range of medicaments makes this function of the pharmacist of increasing value and can save the medical staff much time and trouble.
- (7) The pharmacist is the most suitable person to instruct nurses in those aspects of pharmacy of which they are required to have knowledge and to ensure that this knowledge is kept up-to-date. He can be of service in this respect not in teaching hospitals alone, but in all hospitals.

THE PHARMACIST AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Pharmacists in the service of local authorities can render important service elsewhere than in hospitals and dispensaries. In the contracts and supplies departments concerned with medical stores the employment of one or more pharmacists is bound to lead to efficiency and economy. In the Public Health department of an authority responsible for hospitals, dispensaries, A.R.P. first aid posts and similar services, pharmacists can undertake the duties of supervising and inspecting the distribution and storage of drugs and medicines and surgical supplies generally. This has become an increasingly important duty of local authorities in view of the widespread distribution of medical stores for the purpose of air raid precautions schemes.

OTHER MATTERS

The staff of the pharmaceutical department must be such as to ensure that the chief pharmacist has adequate time for

such administrative duties as may be allotted to him. In general, except in small hospitals, where only a restricted number of hours service is required, there should be at least one other pharmacist. Adequate semi-skilled or unskilled labour should also be available as well as clerical assistance.

The title "**Pharmacist**" should be accorded to the head of the pharmaceutical department and to his assistants who are pharmacists. The term "dispenser" has been rendered obsolete by the increasing scope of the duties of the head of the pharmaceutical department and is no longer employed by the Navy, the London County Council, the large voluntary hospitals and similar bodies by whom pharmacists are employed. For similar reasons "the Dispensary" has now become one section only of the department, the proper designation of which, recognised in the Poisons Rules, 1935, is the "pharmaceutical department."

In small hospitals where the appointment of a full-time pharmacist is not justified arrangements can usually be made for the pharmaceutical work to be undertaken by a pharmacist in business in the neighbourhood either as a visitor to the hospital or in his own pharmacy. Arrangements may also be made for the appointment of an "Honorary Pharmacist" to act as an advisor when the amount of work does not justify the appointment of a full-time pharmacist.

The salary scales and conditions of employment of pharmacists in hospitals will necessarily vary with the responsibilities involved. Hospital authorities will naturally wish to offer such terms as will attract and hold candidates of the right type. The Council of the Society and the Guild of Public Pharmacists are prepared to give advice to governing bodies which may apply to them for information upon appropriate salaries to be paid in particular areas.

The conditions of employment of the Chief Pharmacist should be such as to ensure him as much freedom in the conduct of the affairs of his department as may be compatible with the constitution of the hospital. The greater the scope afforded to the pharmacist in recommending the placing of contracts and generally in the conduct of the affairs of his department the greater will be the efficiency and economy secured.

